To protect patients from methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) infections and develop effective MRSA prevention strategies, facilities must know the MRSA prevalence among their specific patient population and understand when and where transmission occurs. MRSA surveillance provides this type of insight. MRSA surveillance can be either active or passive.

## Active Surveillance1

* Involves collecting cultures at admission and/or during hospital stay

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| --- | --- |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| * Shows the total burden of MRSA among patients who may be asymptomatic or symptomatic, allowing hospital units to: * Take the appropriate steps to prevent MRSA transmission to other patients * Interrupt the progression from colonization to invasive infection among patients who are already MRSA colonized * A more comprehensive and effective tool to detect, monitor, and prevent MRSA transmission | * Requires additional resources, including increased supplies and staff time to collect and process surveillance cultures |

## Passive Surveillance1

* Involves monitoring the results of clinical cultures that grow MRSA
* Passive surveillance methods:
  + Monitor results of all clinical cultures from symptomatic patients to document and analyze the cultures that grow MRSA
  + Use laboratory-identified (LabID) MRSA bacteremia surveillance data: Reported by most U.S. hospitals as a publicly reported hospital-associated infection

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| --- | --- |
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| * Easier to accomplish * Requires less resources | * **LabID MRSA bacteremia surveillance data:** Only detects patients with MRSA blood stream infections, missing other types of infections * **Positive MRSA clinical cultures:** Does not identify the full reservoir of asymptomatically colonized patients, underestimating the overall hospital-wide prevalence of MRSA by as much as 85 percent |

# Additional Steps to Consider

* Ensure accurate, consistent, and ongoing MRSA surveillance data collection.
* MRSA surveillance data allow facilities to detect outbreaks, spot unexpected increases in disease occurrence, and guide and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies.
* Utilize the MRSA surveillance data to inform and initiate comprehensive infection prevention strategies for MRSA prevention.

# Reference

1. Calfee DP, Salgado CD, Classen D, et al. Strategies to prevent transmission of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* in acute care hospitals. Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol. 2008 Oct;29 Suppl 1:S62-80. PMID: 18840090.

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